

1104.0 - CURF Microdata News, Nov 2010

Latest ISSUE Released at 11:30 AM (CANBERRA TIME) 26/11/2010

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This page last updated 26 November 2010

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IN THIS ISSUE

The ABS is committed to increasing access to microdata and in late 2009 set up a project to explore and develop new microdata tools. An important part of the project is finding out how researchers would like to access microdata and what analysis they would like to be able to do. The first phase of this user consultation took place in late 2009 and over the last several months has been followed by a more detailed discussion with microdata users. Find out more about the project and what researchers told in the article in this Newsletter.

A reminder that ABS publishes a bibliography of citations for publications that have used CURFs. This helps promote your research using CURFs and assists ABS to understand the types and extent of use of CURFs. Please email information about your published research.

And to help you directly access the CURF Microdata web pages, don't forget to bookmark our URL short cut: www.abs.gov.au/about/microdata . You can of course also navigate to the Microdata home page via the Services link from the ABS home page.

Finally, I would like to wish all our CURF users, Contact Officers and Responsible Officers a safe and happy holiday season.

Kim Farley-Larmour
Director, Microdata Access Strategies

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CURF RELEASES

This part of the CURF News describes recent and forthcoming CURF releases. You can also keep up to date with CURF releases by subscribing to our free Email Notification Service or the ABS RSS Feed. To apply for access to any of the following please use the MiCRO online CURF application system web page.

Microdata: National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey, Expanded CURF, Reissue (ABS cat. no 4720.0.55.001)

Released: 1 September

Microdata from the 2008 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey (NATSISS) is available in the form of two Expanded Confidentialised Unit Record Files (CURFs).

The CURFs contain confidentialised data about each selected person and the household to which they belong. Data are available for the following topics: language and culture, social capital, life experiences, health, education, work, income and finances, housing and mobility, transport, information technology, and safety, crime and justice.

The files are only available through the Remote Access Data Laboratory (RADL). The RADL is available for authorised users via the ABS web site and enables the ABS to make more detailed microdata available than on CD-ROM, while still maintaining the confidentiality of ABS data providers.

Information about the data content, technical details and conditions of use is provided in the 2008 NATSISS Users' Guide (ABS cat. no 4720.0).

Microdata: Labour Force and Labour Mobility, Basic and Expanded CURF, Australia, 2010 (ABS cat. no 6202.0.30.004)

Expected release: 9 December 2010

These Basic and Expanded CURFs contains data from both the monthly Labour Force survey and the related Labour Mobility supplementary survey.

The Labour Mobility data is in relation to people aged 15 years and over who had worked at some time during the year ending February 2010. In addition to the standard labour force data items, the Labour Mobility data provides details of changes in jobs between employers/businesses for up to three jobs and, for those people who have been with their employer/business for the last 12 months, the changes in their job including promotion, transfer, changes in occupation and usual hours worked. Estimates can be cross-classified by demographics such as state, sex, age, marital status and country of birth, as well as labour force characteristics.

Steps to confidentialise the dataset are taken to ensure the integrity of data, optimise its content and maintain confidentiality of respondents. They include removing any information that might uniquely identify an individual, reducing the level of detail for some items and collapsing some categories.

The Basic CURF is available on CD-ROM and users are able to tabulate, manipulate and analyse data to their individual specifications.

The Expanded CURF is available in the RADL only.

For future CURF releases please see our [List of Expected CURFs web page](#)

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CURFS, CENSUS TABLE BUILDER AND MORE VIA THE UNIVERSITIES AGREEMENT

What is it?

The ABS/Universities Australia Agreement provides a range of microdata products and services to 35 Australian universities. While access to ABS CURFs has been included in the Agreement for many years, from 2009 the Agreement has also included access to Census Table Builder, use of Expanded CURFs in the on-site Data Lab (ABSDL) in ABS Offices and, access to Statistics New Zealand Basic CURFs.

Also new from 2009 is use of CURFs (and Census Table Builder) for some commercial purposes. This acknowledges and facilitates the contribution of the academic to other organisation via consultancies and other activities. Permitted commercial uses under the Agreement include:

- Consultancy services for a third party, based on CURFs or use of Census Table Builder
- Statistical and other reports and publications produced from CURFs or from use of Census Table Builder
- Teaching materials developed from CURFs or from use of Census Table Builder

Does the Agreement mean that access is free?

No, and yes. Universities Australia has paid for access on behalf of the Australian universities participating in the Agreement. But individual staff members and students are not charged for their use of the products and services covered under the Agreement.

Find out more

A link to the list of the 35 universities participating in the Agreement is shown on the ABS/Universities Australia Agreement web page.

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UPDATE! ABS WORK ON NEW DIRECTIONS FOR MICRODATA ACCESS

Access to microdata assists and encourages informed decision making through enabling wider use of ABS data for social and economic research and analysis. The ABS has been making microdata available in the form of Confidentialised Unit Record Files (CURFs) since 1985, with more than 120 Basic and Expanded CURFs currently available. ABS is committed to improving access to unit record data.

Today there is strong user demand for access to more detailed unit record data and for this to be available in a more flexible way, across a wider array of datasets (such as business data and longitudinal linked datasets). This, along with a number of other drivers for change including the growing risk of identification, has led the ABS to propose a new strategy for accessing ABS microdata into the future.

As first reported in 'New directions for microdata access', in November 2009, our future strategy is to:

1. continue to produce and release Basic CURFs for use in the user's environment;
2. progressively replace RADL with a remote execution environment for microdata (REEM); and
3. to increase the use of the ABSDL for complex analysis of microdata, including providing access to longitudinal and linked datasets.

The key components of the REEM are the development of a Survey Table Builder (similar to the Census TableBuilder) and an Analysis Service (for statistical analysis). It is proposed that these services will access de-identified detailed microdata, with confidentiality routines built into the outputs generated to ensure that they are confidentialised in line with ABS legislative requirements and can be released as public use outputs (that is, they can be published and shared with others without restrictions).

REEM will use internationally recognised standards for the exchange of data and metadata including the use of the Data Documentation Initiative (DDI) and Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange (SDMX) and machine to machine interfaces.

Progress on the first stage of REEM was reported in the ABS Methodological News September 2010 issue.

User consultations

Results from the initial user consultations in late 2009 fed directly into the developments in the first stage of REEM. Further consultation with microdata users have taken place over the last several months. These included a Workshop on 28 October 2010 with experienced researchers engaged in more high-end statistical analysis as well as a series of group discussions with researchers from a broad range of organisations.

Researchers told us that they value the time they spend in undertaking analysis. They said that while some users require tabulations only, others also want to be able to undertake pre-analysis investigations such as exploratory data analysis and data transformations and derivations, and that they would prefer to be able to do this in a flexible manner. The researchers also said that they need to be able to understand the relationships that exist in the data. To this end researchers typically use both summary statistics and microdata.

The information from users through the sessions was most appreciated by ABS and will influence the direction of the development of an ABS analysis service. And we take this opportunity to thank everyone who provided feedback, ideas and time.

And it's not too late to contribute your views and ideas about future ABS microdata access. To do so, please contact the project manager, Melissa Gare via the Microdata Access email address microdata.access@abs.gov.au.

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ABS Christmas shutdown - no manual clearance in RADL

The ABS will be closed for the period 25 December to 3 January 2010 inclusive. Clients will continue to receive RADL automatic output clearance but no manual clearance service will be available during that time.

If the lack of availability for manual clearance will cause serious difficulties during this period please do not hesitate to contact the RADL Administrator before the shutdown period, at [<radl@abs.gov.au>](mailto:radl@abs.gov.au).

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PLEASE TELL US ABOUT YOUR PUBLICATIONS!

ABS Confidentialised Unit Record Files (CURFs) are used by researchers for a very broad range of purposes, with the results of the analyses appearing in academic theses, journal articles, government reports and conference papers. Not all of these publications are in the public domain but if yours is, then we would be delighted to include its citation on the ABS Published Research using CURF Microdata web pages.

The Published Research web pages promote your publications but also help ABS understand the range of research activities undertaken using CURFs.

You can submit information about your publications at any time by emailing a citation, URL or other reference to microdata.access@abs.gov.au

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CURF Microdata News is a quarterly newsletter created by the Microdata Access Strategies Section at the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS).

CURF Microdata News is aimed at informing new and current Confidentialised Unit Record File (CURF) Microdata users about issues and developments in the access to, and use of, CURF Microdata. The newsletter periodically covers topics such as available and forthcoming microdata releases, terms and conditions of access, responsible access to microdata and best practice tips, pricing, microdata research outputs, frequently asked questions, and information about applying for ABS CURF microdata.

Interested readers are also invited to visit the CURF Microdata pages on the ABS web site for relevant up-to-date information about each of these matters.

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